

THE ADVENT HOPE IN ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES

BY

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, D.D.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

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PREFACE

THESE three lectures have been given in Westminster Abbey on the Saturday afternoons in Advent, 1910. I have printed with them a sermon preached before the University of Cambridge on Sunday, May 7, 1893, which contains in a more expanded form some of the thoughts which, owing to restrictions of time, were too much compressed in the second and third lectures.

THE DEANERY, WESTMINSTER,
Christmas Eve, 1910.

THE ADVENT HOPE IN ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES

I

CHRISTIANITY came into a despairing world with a message of hope. In his earliest epistle, and again in one of his latest, St. Paul describes the Gentiles to whom he preached, by the same pathetic phrase as "having no hope"—nothing to look forward to in the great future. What was the hope which he brought to them? and more especially, what did he mean by "that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," which we have come to speak of as the Second Advent?

In three lectures we can do little more than study the language which he uses on this subject in his first two epistles, and compare it with the larger vision which came to him in later

days, as the divine purpose for the world of men was more fully revealed to him.

The whole subject of Eschatology, or the Doctrine of the Last Things, has come suddenly to the front in recent days, being pressed forward by a school of German critics, who now seek to reconstruct the Gospel history in accordance with the theory that our Lord believed that the world was about to come to an immediate end. Papers at the last Church Congress dealt with this particular question, and I do not propose to handle it further than is necessary for our present purpose.

It is right to recognise that our Lord's human training in knowledge not only was rooted in the Old Testament scriptures, which the Jewish nation recognised as divine, but also must have been greatly influenced by the general religious beliefs and expectations which had gradually grown up in the century and a half before His birth. The chief literary instrument for the propagation of these beliefs and expectations was the apocalypse—a form of writing of which the book of Daniel is an example just within the Jewish Canon and the book of Enoch is an example just outside it.

The great sufferings of the people had led earnest souls to look forward to an ultimate redemption by God, in which their oppressors should be destroyed, and they themselves should become the supreme rulers in God's name of the whole earth. In the great vision of Daniel vii various world-powers are represented one after another by monstrous creatures, less than human though with certain human characteristics and capacities. The first beast is "like a lion," the second "like a bear," the third "like a leopard"; the fourth is like none of these, but is dreadful and terrible, with mysterious horns. After these monsters have each in turn exercised an inhuman tyranny God Himself intervenes as the Judge of all, and, the power of the beasts having been finally taken away, there appears in the clouds one "like a son of man"—that is to say, like a man—and to him is given the kingdom, universal and everlasting.

The figure "like a man" stands in contrast with the beasts who have appeared before. He is a symbol, perhaps, rather than an individual. In the interpretation of the vision which follows he no longer appears, and we read instead that after the Judgment "the kingdom and

dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." It is God's kingdom, which He entrusts to His saints, who are symbolised by the figure "like a man" in the vision.

We might compare or contrast with this the long and rambling vision in the book of Enoch, in which, after many symbolic animals have appeared, the white bull comes at the end of all and fulfils the Divine purpose. But enough has been said to illustrate some part at least of the apocalyptic method, by which the religious expectations of the Jewish nation found their expression.

In order to sum up the main conceptions which are variously set forth in the Jewish apocalyptic literature, I will quote a few sentences from Professor E. von Dobschütz's *Eschatology of the Gospels* (p. 71):—

"In whatever way salvation was conceived, the very aim of Jewish religion was to get this salvation: not so much to ensure a share in it (because most Jews supposed this to be their

natural right), but to get God to bring it. Because it was not to be brought by means of human operation. It was supposed to be a quite superhuman, supernatural acting by God Himself, sending His salvation to His people. Only that this faithful people may influence His motion by pressing on Him in prayer, fasting, and doing His ordinances in the law. As to how God would do it there was no certainty; either He would come by Himself, breaking open the heaven and descending, or He would send His Messiah, the blessed one, His beloved, His Son, the Son of Man, the Son of David. This coming would be preceded by various signs. The heathen power would rise to an almost unheard-of level of tyranny, cruelty, and abomination; the iniquity of the godless and unrighteous would join with them, so that the apostasy from the one God, the living and true one, and His worship, to the idols and all the sins of idolatry would become general; there would be signs in the heaven and on earth, the sun giving no more light, the moon being changed into blood, the stars falling from heaven, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, frightening mankind everywhere. Then at the very culmination

of horrors the Messiah would appear in a miraculous way, and by His wonderful power He would destroy all His enemies, and by the aid of His angels collect His chosen people from all parts of the world, and reign over them in justice and peace."

The relation of our Lord's thought and teaching to these conceptions which pervaded the best Jewish life of His time is not our present subject. To those who would study it I can commend the little book from which I have quoted,¹ and from which I will take another passage before I leave it (p. 74):—

"Whatever may have been the position taken by Jesus in regard to eschatology, there can be no doubt that eschatology was much more important in early Christianity than in later Judaism. It was so because the Messianic hope had found in Jesus its proper object. Since Jesus had appeared, people were convinced that His glorious advent (the Parousia) was to be expected at the earliest term. This is the main distinction between early Christian and late Jewish eschatology; all has received a stricter form, many possibilities

¹ *The Eschatology of the Gospels.* By Professor Ernst von Dobschütz. Hodder & Stoughton. 1910.

being excluded by the very fact that it was Jesus, with all His personal characteristics, who was to be expected; all has been brought nearer; the fact that the Messiah was known, that it was Jesus, and that Jesus had disappeared only for a short time, giving urgency to all expectations."

With this introduction we must now turn to the earliest epistles of St. Paul. About the year A.D. 50—that is to say, rather more than twenty years after the Crucifixion and fifteen years after his conversion—St. Paul crossed to Europe, and after a short stay at Philippi spent two or three months at Thessalonica. After that he was a year and a half at Corinth, from which city he wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Here for the first time we see the eager, warm-hearted missionary depicted by his own writings, and we must remember as we read that behind every line of the letter is the teaching which he had given in person, of which he only needs to remind his readers, though here and there he desires to state it more precisely. Our method must be to sketch the general line of each epistle, emphasising the passages which bear on our subject.

In the first epistle the Apostle thanks God for the wonderful power of the Gospel which his

Thessalonian converts exhibit. He hears of them again and again as a pattern community, giving a clear ringing note of witness throughout the cities of Greece. Every one has heard, he says, how you have turned to God from your idols to serve the living and true God, and *to wait for His Son from the heavens*, whom He raised from the dead—Jesus, *who is delivering us from the wrath which is coming*.

God only knows, he continues, how hard we worked for such a result. We pleaded with you, as a father might with his own children, one by one, to walk worthy of God, who is *calling you to His kingdom and glory*. You have had to suffer, just as the Jews in Palestine who have believed have had to suffer from their unbelieving kinsfolk, who slew the Lord Jesus, and who have tried by persecution to stop me from preaching to Gentiles like yourselves. They have filled up their cup; *the wrath has finally arrived upon them*.

The apostle feels bitterly his absence from them. They are his hope and joy and crown of exultation "*in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming*." You must not, he says, be shaken by these afflictions. We told you that

you would have them. We have them ourselves, and we are comforted by your faith and steadfastness. As we cannot come to your help, may the Lord strengthen your hearts that they may be blameless in holiness in the presence of God our Father *at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His holy ones.*

After some admonitions as to purity of life he turns to a topic in regard to which he must have heard that they felt some distress. He had evidently left on their minds the impression—which indeed is left upon ours by his letter thus far—that the coming of the Lord Jesus from the heavens would very soon put an end to their troubles by the establishment of His kingdom. But even in the brief interval since St. Paul had left them some of their number had died. It had probably never been made clear to them whether the kingdom was to be established on earth or in another world altogether; nor does St. Paul make this plain in what follows. But if it was to be on earth, then what share would their dead friends be able to have in it?

St. Paul begins by speaking of these departed Christians as sleeping—that is all that he says of their present condition. They must not mourn

for them, as the rest of their neighbours would who have no hope as to the future. The resurrection of Jesus is a sure pledge that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep as disciples of Jesus.

Then, speaking as an ancient prophet "in the word of the Lord," he gives an apocalyptic picture of the future. We, he says, who are left living on till the coming of the Lord shall not have any advantage or precedence over those who have fallen asleep. The Lord Himself, with a stirring summons—the archangel's voice, the trumpet of God—will come down from heaven. Then, first of all, the dead in Christ will rise again. Next, we and they together will be caught up and carried away in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. He does not say whether we shall then descend with Him to the earth for the establishment of the kingdom, or go up with Him into the heavens. He merely adds: In this way we shall be with the Lord for ever. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

We must remember that this is apocalyptic language, which expresses spiritual things under material forms. It is the language of one who

elsewhere speaks of himself as having been "caught up" (the very same word as here) "into the third heaven," and "caught up into Paradise"—whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell. Such language he used because there was none other in his power to use, if he were to speak at all of things which altogether transcend our common human experience.

It seems clear that he thought of these departed Thessalonian Christians as sleeping in their graves for a little time, soon to be awakened and to rejoin their fellows in the presence of the Lord. But more important than the method which is thus pictorially described was the time of the Lord's coming. He had already taught them about this, he says, and he had nothing new to write. The one thing certain was, that it would take the world by surprise; but they would not be taken by surprise, because they were continually on the look-out for it. Their duty was to maintain this attitude of sober wide-awakeness, assured that God intended them not to come under the wrath, but to obtain the salvation brought by the Lord Jesus, "who died for us that, whether waking or sleeping,

we should live together with Him." "Wherefore," he repeats, "comfort one another and build one another up, as indeed you do."

After some precepts of practical life he closes with the emphatic prayer that every part of their being—their spirit, their soul, and their body—may be kept in integrity and without blame for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly he does not contemplate that he or they (with some possible exceptions) will die before the Advent.

We might suppose that thoughts like these would be exceedingly unsettling; that they would be quite destructive of that calm and steady outlook on the life and work of every day, which was enjoined by the teaching of Christ and was so marked a feature of His own earthly ministry. There is no hurry in the life of Christ, and plainly He intended that there should be none in the lives of His disciples. And St. Paul himself everywhere teaches and organises as though an indefinitely long period were before the Church. Thus in this very epistle, after urging the most eager and watchful expectation of the Coming, he goes on at once to say: "But we beseech you, brethren, to know those who are labouring among you, and who preside over you in the Lord and

instruct you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves, and put down all disorder."

How are we to account for this remarkable antithesis? Mainly, I think, by consideration of the essential thought of a present salvation. To those converts from heathenism the change that they had already experienced was greater than any that could be in store for them. To use later words of St. Paul, the old things had passed away already: they had already become new. And, as he has said in this epistle, Jesus is even now our deliverer from the wrath that is coming. God is calling you to His kingdom. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." That is, Your salvation is begun; its continuance is as sure as God is sure.

This is the new thought which Christianity has introduced into the midst of the Jewish expectations of salvation. This conviction that the kingdom *is*, and *is to be*, leads to many puzzling inconsistencies of phrase in the Gospels and in the rest of the New Testament. The salvation is both present and future; the life is both life now and life to come—eternal life in Christ. And that is the steady thought. Nothing which the

future has in store can compare with that passage from death to life which has already taken place. All that is to come is but consequential to that.

In so far as this present salvation was exultingly realised—as it was among the earliest converts—the true balance was kept. The enthusiastic joy which marks the first Christians was a safeguard against the paralysis which the immediately expected Advent, the moment of which was nevertheless utterly uncertain, might have produced. “Keep rejoicing,” says St. Paul at the close of his letter; “keep rejoicing, praying, thanking.” It was his own life: he knew what he was saying.

But this high level was hard to sustain amid the ordinary cares and business of every day, especially when the inspiring apostle was for a long time absent. In fact, it was not sustained; and St. Paul soon learned that the immediate expectation of the Advent was rendering men unfit for the performance of common duties. In his next epistle to the same Thessalonian Church he will have to deal with this new situation.

II

IN our former lecture we reviewed St. Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians. In passing to the second epistle we can hardly fail to note a small change of phrase in his opening words. Whereas the first epistle began—as St. Paul so often afterwards begins: “We thank God always for all of you,” the second begins: “We ought to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet.” The “all” has gone out, and the “ought” has come in. “We are bound to thank God”; yes, certainly—he seems to try to recover himself—“it is meet,” you certainly deserve it: the wonderful increase of your faith, and the abounding love which you have to one another, make us even boast of you to other churches—specially in view of the afflictions which you so patiently endure.

These afflictions, he continues, are a visible proof of God's just judgment for which we look: for you will be counted worthy of His kingdom,

when in justice He afflicts the afflicters and gives the afflicted release—a release which we shall share with you *at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power, in a flame of fire*, bringing vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus: for they shall pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and the glory of His strength, *when He is come to be glorified in His holy ones and to be marvelled at in all who have believed* (and you are among them) *in that great day*. So we are praying always for you, that God will make you worthy of the calling, that our Lord's name may be glorified in you, and ye may be glorified in Him.

The apostle is apocalyptic once again, and he paints the dark side of the Coming, as before he painted its bright side. He has nothing to withdraw. He still looks, and would have them look, to the great climax. Yet there is an unmistakable note of anxiety, and he goes on at once to explain it to us.

“But, brethren, we beseech you, as regards the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the gathering of us all together unto Him, not to be driven out of your sober senses” (“out of your wits,” as

Wiclif renders it), "and not to be agitated and upset, whether by a prophetic utterance, or by anything we may have said or written, to the effect that the day of the Lord is actually upon us."

Do not be deceived, he continues: much must happen before that. The great Apostasy must come first, and the revealing of the Man of Wickedness. Do you not remember that I told you about him, and how he would sit in God's temple and make himself out to be God? And you know there is a hindrance, which prevents his being revealed before his proper time. The secret is at work already—that secret of wickedness: but the hinderer has not yet been removed. When he is removed, then will be the time; the Wicked Man will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus with the breath of His mouth will destroy him. He will annihilate by the manifestation of His Coming the Man of Wickedness, whose own coming (for he too has a coming) is due to the superhuman working of Satan, with all kinds of false miracles and other deceits for those who are being lost because they received not the love of the truth which would have saved them. So God sends on them a force of delusion to make

them believe the lie, that they may all come under judgment for not having believed the truth, but having taken delight in unrighteousness.

We need not pause to discuss these apocalyptic details one by one. It is the doctrine of the Antichrist—already conceived by Jewish writers under the name of Beliar, but sharpened into distinctness now that the Christ had actually appeared: a personal embodiment of ideal wickedness and falsehood, as Christ Jesus was the personal embodiment of ideal goodness and truth; having a mystery, or secret, which stands over against the eternal mystery or secret of the Christ; having a revelation, and a coming, and a power of working miracles.

It is unnecessary to look to the worship of the emperor for an explanation of the claim of the Man of Wickedness to be divine. We have enough in the language of the book of Daniel, together with that sharpening of distinct personality which the Incarnation had brought to the Messianic conception—quite enough to account for St. Paul's apocalyptic symbolism. It is important that we should still remember that he is apocalyptic; that he speaks of high spiritual

things in the terms of earth, terms which were themselves not new, but borrowed and adapted to a new purpose.

As to what the Apostasy is, we are not told anything. It is difficult to think that the apostle at this period can have contemplated the probability of a great falling away among his Christian converts. At any rate he was not thinking of his Thessalonians.

We are bound to thank God, he says once again, that God chose you from the beginning for salvation. Stand fast, therefore, and keep the tradition which you have been taught whether by our word or our letter. We pray for you, and you must pray for us. Withdraw from any disorderly brother who goes against the tradition which you have had from us. We gave you a pattern of steady work; and now we command that he who is not willing to work must not be given food to eat. You must check this disorder and idleness, and live quietly. May the Lord of peace give you peace!

St. Paul has not changed his teaching, nor his manner of setting it forth. He had said these things before, but he writes them yet more distinctly now. A series of events must intervene

before the Lord's Coming. Wickedness will come to a head in a great revolt and a great leader. Not until his coming will be the Coming of Christ. Meanwhile Christian life must go steadily and soberly on.

It is very noteworthy that St. Paul does not, like most of the Jewish apocalyptic writers, give us a description either of the torments of the lost or of the joys of the saved. No doubt he was satisfied with the thought that the blessedness of the future was to be the same in kind as the blessedness of the present salvation. "For ever with the Lord" is all that he wishes to say.

When we consider the prominent place which Eschatology holds in the two letters which we have been studying, it is somewhat surprising to turn to what seems to be the next epistle of St. Paul and to find not a single word as to these fascinating topics. He says indeed that the Lord Jesus Christ "gave Himself for our sins, to rescue us from this present evil world"; but it is present salvation of which he is speaking. If he speaks of the future at all, it is only as a time of reaping whatever we sow now, whether for good or for evil. And if he speaks of "the revelation of Christ," it is not the future Coming that he here describes

by those words but, twice over, the revelation of Christ to himself or in himself.

This is proof, if proof were needed, of the sanity of his outlook, as against those who would have us believe that the earliest Christianity was entirely dominated by the expectation of an immediate Advent. He is writing now not to a Gentile community in Greece, but to a group of churches which he had founded in Asia Minor, and which he calls "the churches of Galatia." Here there was a powerful Jewish element pressing hard upon the Gentile converts, to force them into some conformity with Judaism. A far greater danger than the excitement as to the nearness of the Advent faced him here. The very principle of the universal Gospel was at stake. The tender apostle waxes fierce, even passionate, for the truth: here and now is the battle, and he will die rather than yield.

Yet out of the midst of the controversy one new and pregnant thought arises, which will prove in the end to have been the very germ of the great human hope which he finds in Christ. It is mysterious indeed, but it is not apocalyptic. It is stated in very short and simple words, though their meaning stretches away almost

infinitely beyond us. The words are these: "Ye are all one"—and the masculine gender shows that he means not a mere notional unity, but one living being—"ye are all one man in Christ Jesus." I must ask for your careful attention as I try to show how out of these great words has grown the Christian conception of the ultimate destiny of humanity.

This word "humanity" has a fascination for our minds in the present day. It is vague, but its vagueness even helps it in appealing to the imagination. We are fond of such terms as the unity or the solidarity of humanity. We do not quite understand them, or see how they are to be practically embodied and realised; but none the less we feel sure that they represent a reality. And we have reason to feel pleasure in them: for they seem to promise us a release from that selfish individual way of living and thinking which clings about us, and clogs our efforts, and narrows and degrades us.

Humanity, we feel, must be greater, more important, than any single man can ever be. To live for humanity, to serve the interests of mankind, must be a nobler life than living for ourselves, our own family circle, or even our nation. And

if the individual man has a destiny before him, surely humanity as a whole must have a destiny—only vastly larger, more magnificent, in which the individual shall be allowed his tiny share. What, then, is to be the future of humanity? whither is it tending? whereunto may it hope to arrive?

I believe that in St. Paul's words we find at least the hint of an answer to our question. I believe that his conception of humanity—though he never uses the term—responds to our deepest instincts and is in harmony with our most recent thoughts. In order to understand it we must try and place ourselves in his position, and observe the various notions with which he was confronted on this subject.

First, then, what conception of the truth of human life did he find current among his own people? To their view humanity was divided into two sections with a deep gulf between them. A tiny fragment was in a special relation to God: all others belonged to the outside, uncared-for, dying world. Jews were accepted, privileged, blessed: theirs were the promises, the future was theirs, they were bound to win in the long run. Gentiles might be powerful now; but they were

outcasts, dogs, accursed by God, only waiting for the full time of His judgment. Jews had a hope: Gentiles had none. There was no hope for humanity as a whole.

And when we turn to the great Gentile world itself, what do we see? First, it was an age of intellectual culture; and here another line of division was being drawn between man and man. Philosophers had their schemes of life and their intellectual systems; but their sympathies were limited to those who could appreciate their teachings. The enlightened Greek world of culture was severed from the vulgar, barbarian world, that knew not the language of education and refinement. The wise man was the king of men, and the world was made for him: some day perhaps he might get his rights, and kings would be philosophers and philosophers be kings. Till then the world was out of joint, and he was wisest and best who had learned to ignore it most. Here, at least, was no common ground of humanity, no common human hope.

Secondly, in social life womankind was kept down and humiliated. Woman was scarcely more than an appendage of man. The wife was hidden away among the slaves, almost as a slave.

The greatest Athenian statesman declared that the one chief virtue of womanhood was not to be conspicuous for praise or blame. Half of humanity, the gentler half, was undeveloped, counted unworthy or incapable of development. Half of humanity was practically doomed to hopelessness

Once more, slavery was a universal institution of society. It had grown with its growth; it was twined about its roots: to attempt to eradicate it would be to exchange social order for chaos. And the great curse of slavery to the world lay in this—the slave was no man. He was merely an animated machine; a live chattel, Aristotle calls him. He was regarded as outside all human interests and sympathies. And thus another vast section of humanity was permanently excluded from hope.

Such was the distracted world on which St. Paul looked out: unbridged crevasses everywhere, social, intellectual, religious. What then, it is time to ask, was the unifying conception which he himself entertained? what reconciling gospel could he bring to meet the needs of all? what message was there which he could proclaim “to the Jew first and also to the Greek”? in virtue

of what new revelation was he "a debtor both to the Greek and also to the barbarian, both to the wise and to the unwise"? how could he hope to raise womanhood, and to regenerate the slave?

His message briefly was this. A new fact had sprung to light: or, rather, an old fact, long hidden, shrouded and veiled from human sight. That fact was the oneness of all human life: that all men were in reality One Man; that with this One Man God had been dealing in all the past; that all history is the record of the education and development of this One Man; that the privilege of the few was for the blessing of the many; that Jew was marked off from Gentile for the ultimate benefit of both; that the issue of all was the building up of One Perfect Man, after the image of his Creator.

To those who could read Genesis aright the truth was written there. Man—not some men, not single individual men, but Man—was created in the image of God. If the likeness of God were to be fully shown, this must be done not by the perfecting of isolated individuals, but by the consummation of the kind. The perfected humanity must be a nobler witness of the Creator than the single man. But now this

great truth, there but dimly foreshadowed, had been revealed in the life of Christ. He was the Son of Man, the Man for all men: the Christ of the Jew and the Christ of the Gentile; the Christ of the cultured and the Christ of the unlearned; the Christ of the man and the Christ of the woman; the Christ of the free-man and the Christ of the slave. In Him all human interests met: on Him all human sins and sorrows were laid. He was the head of the Perfect Man, and so in some sense the head of all individual men: "the head of every man is Christ."

Again and again St. Paul expounds this great truth. The epistle to the Ephesians in particular is based on this fundamental thought. He speaks of it as a secret which none could know until God told it, but which once known must change the whole face of life. "The mystery of His will . . . to gather up in one all things in the Christ": "the mystery of the Christ," that Gentiles are fellow-heirs with Jews in Christ Jesus; the marvellous secret that our Blessed Lord is in His human life the head of a great and ever-growing body, without which He Himself must remain unfulfilled and incom-

plete; the secret of our unified humanity which is now a fact, and shall one day be openly manifested and recognised as such, when the head and the members shall be gloriously revealed as One—the Christ that is to be.

Here was the reconciliation of the world's strifes, the healing of the divisions of humanity. "The new man, which is being renewed after the image of Him that created him; where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondsman, freeman; but Christ is all and in all" (Col. iii. 11). And again, in the passage from which we started, and which now begins to be clear: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek; there can be neither bond nor free; there can be no male and female: for ye are all one"—one man—"in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28).

What was the effect of that truth in St. Paul's day? What may we hope that it will work in our own? For surely we need some reconciling truth, in the despair to which our factions and class-quarrels and religious strifes are bringing us. And yet we have not wider chasms to bridge, higher barriers to scale, uglier wounds to heal, than that great age of the

world's despair to which St. Paul addressed his new message of hope.

Then "the mystery of the Christ" prevailed by slow degrees to unite the apparently irreconcilable. It abolished the distinction between Gentile and Jew; it associated in a common cause the learned and the ignorant; it began, and has gone on since with increasing effectiveness, to elevate womanhood; it has at last worked out in the course of tedious centuries the emancipation of the slave.

And are its triumphs numbered? Or is it to this same truth that we must still look for an answer to the crying questions of to-day? The failure of government by party quarrelling, the distress induced and aggravated by selfish competition and mutual distrust between master and man, the widening gulf between rich and poor—has the Gospel of our common humanity, the Oneness of all men in Christ, no help for these our modern problems? Must we not hope that what it has done in the past is but an earnest and a pledge of greater works than these in the future?

I have tried to show you to-day how the fundamental conception of the unity of all

human life in Christ was revealed to St. Paul as the ground of a universal human hope. We may see in our closing lecture how in his view that hope was to be embodied and made effective, and how it came to transfigure the earlier apocalyptic conception of the Second Coming.

The Advent hope which St. Paul ultimately offers us is no merely individual personal hope. In our best moments we rise above the thought of our own future. We yearn for some wider prospect, some hope for the great world, whose restless seething tide of misery and shame so often staggers our Christian faith. And such a hope, when we find it, does not exclude the individual hope; nay, rather, it is the very ground and basis of it. We have no hope for ourselves which is not a hope equally for the world. It is because I know that God loves the world that I dare to say that God loves me.

III

IN a short course of lectures on so large a subject as I have chosen, it is not possible to do more than study a few points with care and offer some guidance to those who would pursue the enquiry for themselves. We have found the two earliest epistles of St. Paul full of our subject, almost entirely devoted to its consideration. We have found his next epistle, written in other circumstances to other readers, entirely wanting in any reference to it. But yet in that very epistle we met with one significant sentence which contained the germ of St. Paul's ultimate interpretation of the Advent hope. On this point we have still something more to say; but, first, we will rapidly glance at one other epistle—the first epistle to the Corinthians.

The danger which beset the church of Corinth was only partially due to the practical difficulty of uniting Jews and Gentiles in the close bonds of the new Christian society. But in essence it

was the same danger as in the Galatian churches—the peril of divisions threatening to rend asunder what St. Paul has now begun to speak of as “the body of the Christ.” Accordingly the apostle begins to develop and to apply in various directions the great doctrine of the corporate life. But when he looks, as he does again and again, to the return of Christ and the glorious future, we still find him using apocalyptic language, though sometimes he adds words which guide us to its interpretation.

He begins by speaking of the witness which the Corinthian Christians bear to Christ through an abundant manifestation of spiritual gifts, and he describes them as *waiting for the revelation* of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will keep them steadfast so as to be without blame *in the day of our Lord Jesus*. God is faithful, he adds, who has called them into fellowship—the fellowship of His Son (i. 6–9). This word “fellowship” strikes the keynote of the epistle. It is noteworthy that the two thoughts here lie side by side—the return of Christ and the fellowship which has been established in Christ. The latter thought prevails; for the need of unity presses on the apostle’s mind, and he goes on at once

to show the monstrous absurdity of divisions, which seemed to him nothing less than dividing the Christ.

After explaining how he and other teachers, and indeed all members of the Church, great and small, were builders of a single divine temple—namely, themselves in their new unity in Christ—he recurs to the thought of the Advent. The *day* shall manifest each man's work, for it shall be *revealed in fire*. But "the fire" is another name for judgment; and so we see that the apocalyptic symbol is being interpreted for us. Judge nothing prematurely, he adds, *until the Lord come*. He will award praise where it is deserved (iii. 13-15).

The *day of the Lord* is mentioned again when the apostle is speaking of the excommunication of a grievous offender and offering a hope of his ultimate salvation (v. 5). Later he speaks of *the shortening of the time* and of the passing away of the outward scheme of things, "the fashion of this world" (vii. 29-31). And presently he reminds them that in the sacred Supper they constantly proclaim the death of the Lord *until He comes* (xi. 26). Meantime, throughout the whole epistle, he has been expounding and enforcing his

special gospel of oneness in Christ—the one building, the one body. In the truth of the corporate life he finds a sovereign remedy for each mischief in turn that threatens their common life; but he uses the new conception for practical ends only at present, and does not, as he will afterwards in the epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, find in it a mode of interpreting his ultimate hope for the future.

One great passage remains in which once again St. Paul pictures the future in apocalyptic terms. The resurrection—not of Christ, but of Christians—had been called in question by some speculative minds; and the fate of their fellow-Christians who had died was a matter of anxiety, as it had been among the Thessalonians. It was inconceivable, the apostle replied, that those who had fallen asleep in Christ had perished. The resurrection of Christ, which none of them doubted, was a foretaste of what was to be expected. Christ, who had Himself risen, was the firstfruits of those who had fallen asleep. All should be quickened in Him: “Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s, *at His coming*” (xv. 20–23). Finally he declares that the kingdom to which he looks forward belongs to another

sphere and cannot be entered by any of us until a change has passed over our present mortal condition. Like a prophet he breaks forth, as in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, using the symbolism of apocalypse: "This I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruptibility. Behold, I declare to you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we all shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal immortality" (xv. 50-53). And then he closes with words which again remind us of his first letter to the Thessalonians: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord always, knowing that your labour is not vain in the Lord." This apocalyptic vision is for their comfort; but it is not to have a disturbing effect on their daily life.

Thus we have in this first epistle to the Corinthians, as I have already said, the two thoughts lying side by side, and each in turn occupying the attention of the apostle: the

thought of our Lord's personal return described in apocalyptic language, and the thought of the new fellowship which has been established in the Body of the Christ. But these thoughts are still kept distinct, and St. Paul has not yet come to find in the latter the interpretation of the former.

We must now turn again to that large conception of the destiny of mankind, which we were considering in our last lecture, and concerning which something of importance remains to be said. We saw that the age in which St. Paul lived had no great human hope. If Jews had a hope, it was one which excluded Gentiles; and, in the Græco-Roman world, the hope of the philosopher contained no blessing for the poor and ignorant, the whole of womanhood was shut out from any prospect of development, and the slave beyond all others was doomed to perpetual despair. And yet St. Paul was confident that his gospel had a promise for all, irrespective of nationality, class or sex; that it addressed men as human beings on the ground of a common humanity; that it brought into a divided world a new reconciling principle which was deeper

and stronger than all their divisions. This great uniting truth was the oneness of mankind in Christ the Son of Man, the representative Man, the ideal Man, the head of every man: "there can be neither Jew nor Greek; there can be neither bond nor free; there can be no male and female: for ye are all one"—all one man—"in Christ Jesus."

If such was the truth, how was it to find embodiment? How should it secure permanent expression, and become available to heal the divisions of the world? The torch of knowledge or philosophy might be handed across the ages from one intellectual giant to another, scorning the interfering help of lesser minds. But not so moral and spiritual truths; they must be preserved in living realisation; they must find a constant sphere of actual working. Otherwise they survive only as barren speculations; disembodied, they are practically as though they were not.

The book of Genesis up to the call of Abraham is a series of pictures of moral and spiritual revelations, lost again and again through the lack of a due succession which should carry them on. Bright names, like Enoch and Noah, only

throw into deeper gloom the universal sin; candles, so to speak, are lit only to be blown out again and increase the horror of the darkness. Enoch's contemporaries perish in the Flood; Noah's sons build Babel. Not till Abraham is called out to be the chosen father of a chosen family does the revelation become permanent and growing. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do? For I have known him to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. xviii. 19). The family becomes a tribe, the tribe a nation; and through the continuity of national life a channel of steadily increasing revelation is secured. What they heard with their ears they added to what their fathers had told them, and passed it on in turn to the generation that came after them; and so an ever-enlarging deposit of divine truth was handed down from age to age. The Old Testament is the record of this divine training and this ever-expanding revelation.

Our Blessed Lord, who came not to overthrow God's methods but to carry them to fulfilment, contemplated from the first the formation of a divinely-ordered Society to be the depository of

the truth which He had come to reveal. The Jewish nation, as it then stood, was no longer capable of fulfilling this function. The new truth was too large for its narrow limits. To the unity of God it might witness still; but not to its great corollary, the unity of mankind. For the Jewish nation stood by means of its isolation; in that was its glory; by that had its witness been given all along; and in proportion as it had fraternised with its neighbours, or leaned on external allies, it had denied its peculiar prerogative and slighted its divine Protector. The old wine in the old wineskin was good, if it was not exhausted; but the new wine demanded a fresh wineskin, or it could not be preserved at all.

No single nation proudly isolated could witness to the truth of the oneness of mankind. A new society must be formed on a universal basis to embody the universal human hope. The oneness of mankind in creation, in redemption, in destiny, was the correlative of the oneness of the Deity to which Judaism had borne its magnificent witness. Hence it was appropriate and natural that the new society should be evolved out of the old. During the lifetime of Jesus Christ His accepted

adherents were gathered entirely from the Jewish people, to whom His whole attention was confined; and for several years after his departure the Christian Church was simply a guild of Judaism. He Himself never broke with the past; and it was only a series of strange providences that could force the early Christians to extend their boundaries and include any other than Jews within their pale. Thus was Christianity born from the womb of Judaism—the Catholic Church from the isolated nation—and though its mother presently disowned it and cast it off, none the less did it continue to bear her likeness and to reproduce her divinest characteristics.

The old national community had been bound together by two pre-eminent bonds of union: circumcision, which entered the Jewish boy into the sphere of spiritual privilege and brought him into immediate personal relation to the God of the Covenant; and the sacrificial system on which the Covenant rested, and which provided a continual means of return to the Covenant position for any who had neglected it or practically denied it by transgressing its laws.

Similarly the new universal society was to be

linked together by two external bonds of union, more beautiful, more simple, more universal : one a rite of initiation by which individual men and women should be entered into the new fellowship ; the other a rite of continual reunion, by which they should enjoy its highest privileges or be reclaimed again and again from their practical denials of it. Listen to the words of St. Paul : "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free" (1 Cor. xii. 13); and, again, "The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ? because we are one bread, one body, many though we be ; for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. x. 16 f.).

Such in the apostle's view is the Church of Christ, which is His body : a society of men in all nations, among all classes, united by one baptism, breaking one bread, witnessing to the new truth of the oneness of humanity in Christ its head ; and by slow degrees gathering all men into itself and thus claiming them as members of the body of the Christ. So the apostle gazes with steady faith along the vista of the future, until the Christ shall be fulfilled by the union with His body of all the scattered members who

are needed for His perfect manifestation : "until we all attain together unto the unity . . . unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ" (Eph. iv. 13). This must be: and then, when the Christ is manifested, we also shall be manifested with Him in glory (Col. iii. 4).

Such then once more, my brothers, is our Advent hope, as St. Paul has taught it us; and such are the methods which he foresaw of its progressive realisation. In the light which this hope sheds on our present position, how vastly important Church life becomes as the manifestation and realisation of the great human destiny; how real the baptism of our children becomes; how real our communions become; what a splendour breaks upon our united worship! For we are the body of Christ; our common life as churchmen and churchwomen is the visible expression of the living Christ in His sacred body on earth.

Nor can we fail to see how great is our duty and our responsibility. Are we ourselves in active co-operation with the will of God in this respect? Are we believing in this truth at all? Are we living by it and helping to work it out? More

particularly, have we grasped our own relation to Christ as our head? We have been made members of His body in our baptism; are we living as such? Are we in the Holy Communion constantly returning from our separation and our selfishness into the one body, so that "we are one with Him and He with us"? Or are we "not holding the head," and so denying, stultifying, maiming the body?

We sometimes mourn over our divergences and schisms; we deplore before God "the great dangers we are in by reason of our unhappy divisions"; and in this light the dangers are more than ever manifest. But what if we ourselves, in the independence of our individual wills, in the refusal to bring every thought into captivity to the Christ, are the very seat and centre of schism and rebellion? Brethren, let each one of us solemnly put to himself the question: Does the Body of Christ gain or lose by the fact of my connection with it? The fact, I say; for we cannot alter that. We are members of the Body of Christ. The sin of one member is the loss of all; the holiness of one member is the gain of all. "The Body is one." Does the Body of Christ gain or lose by the fact of your membership in it?

But let us end on a brighter note—the note of the Advent hope. At first to St. Paul this hope was very vague and undefined. He spoke of it in terms which he had borrowed out of the past, in the language of the apocalyptic seers. He knew that there must be a great struggle; indeed he was in it already, “fighting the good fight.” He knew that it would issue in victory, for he was experiencing victory already—“we are more than conquerors” even now. He thought that the ultimate victory was very near, and that he should live to see it. He changed his mind about that in his later epistles: and he learned that to die was more than to sleep—it was to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. But he also learned that there was something more to be looked for than “our gathering together” to meet the Lord in the air. He called that something more “the summing up of all things in the Christ.” He dropped the apocalyptic symbols which had served his purpose at first; and he spoke words plain enough, though their meaning stretches out into far more wonderful mystery.

We cannot think that he would have unsaid at the end what he said at the beginning; for he

spoke, as he tells us, "in the word of the Lord," like one of the ancient prophets. He might have said, as we perhaps must be content to say to-day: There are two sides of the truth, and I cannot wholly reconcile them. Assuredly "the Lord will come," the Christ will be fulfilled. Think of it in symbols, or rise to the height of the eternal purpose. Either way it is still beyond our utmost imaginings. But to Him who is able to do far more for us than we ask or imagine, to Him whose mighty power is actually at work in us now—to Him, I say, be glory—glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus—glory in the Body alike and in the Head—through all the ages of eternity.

THE UNITY OF LIFE IN CHRIST

“Without Me ye can do nothing.”—ST. JOHN xv. 5.

WHATEVER speaks of combination and co-operation has an attractive sound for modern ears. The progress of civilised life has been one steady march in the direction of combining and of unifying; increasing by co-operation the efficiency of the whole, but at the necessary cost of the separate completeness of the part. Division of labour has meant more work done, but fewer all-round workers; specialisation of study—the particular application of the general principle which touches us most nearly in this place—has issued in a vast increase of knowledge, and for most men a proportionate limitation of the subjects which in any worthy sense they can hope to know. Faculties have even atrophied for want of use; men who in former times would have been strong on many sides are

strong now only on one. "The individual lessens." We are beset more than ever with limitations; we are even in danger of depreciating what we cannot hope to master, of exalting our own province at the expense of others, of losing sympathy with other workers; in a word, of narrowness of interest, of unworthy jealousy.

And yet we cannot doubt that we are advancing all along the line, moving forward with a stride more rapid than human history has ever known before. We are gaining by our very loss. "The individual lessens, but the world is more and more."

The whole is advancing at the cost of the parts. Such is the witness of facts as we see them in the lives of others, and experience them somewhat sadly in our own. This is the vision of life that grows clearer and clearer before our imagination: a baffling, perturbing dream—what is the interpretation of it?

Have we cheated ourselves with our belief in the sacredness and worth of individual lives? Is the individual to be nothing after all? Or is it that our conception of the perfection of the individual has been a faulty one and needs

correction? Have we been claiming for him more than his rights in asking independence, self-sufficiency, the separate roundness of a perfect whole? Can it be that, after all, the individual is not the Man, but merely an integral part of the true Man?

Is the true Man that larger whole which is the organised sum of all the parts? Is it this that is creation's final goal? Is the consummation of all things to consist, not in a mere total of millions of monotonously perfect units, but rather in the developed completeness of one Perfect Man, made up of countless individual men, who have reached their ultimate attainment in that limited perfection which is the perfect adaptation of a part to the performance of its function as a part, not as a separate and independent whole?

The truth that all men are but one man may justly be said to be the peculiar revelation of Christianity, and in some sense its most characteristic revelation.

The chief exponent of this truth is certainly St. Paul. To him it was the truth of truths, the central message of the Gospel committed to his trust. In his early days he was by

nationality and education the champion of exclusiveness, of distinctive Jewish privilege—a strange prelude to the life which was to claim the world for Christ. In his great moment of transition he was taught a lesson which he never could forget—the revelation of a new bond of union which related man to One who was a man—that Jesus of Nazareth stood in an unheard-of closeness of relation to those who had thrown in their lot with Him and had been baptized in His name. To lay hands on them was actually to lay hands on Him, for He and they were one: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” The sight of the risen Lord, and the revelation of His transcendent oneness with those who represented His cause and carried on His work, set all things in a new light to this earnest soul; and when he bowed his will in unreserved submission, and asked what henceforth he must do, the answer came at once that he the exclusive Jew should bear Christ’s name to the Gentiles.

It was long before events were ripe, and he himself was duly fitted to carry out the commission thus given him, and to wear the mantle of the martyred Stephen as the prophet of the

wider hope. But he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, and he lived to proclaim in Jewish synagogues, in Gentile schools, in apostolic conference, and "in writing to remain to posterity," his own first and last and only Gospel—that God had made of one all nations upon the earth; that God in Christ was reconciling a world unto Himself; that "there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for all of you are one—one man—in Christ Jesus."

Everywhere and always the same truth breaks forth in his writings, or lies close beneath the surface. His whole fabric of theology is built up on this as its foundation; his conception of atonement and redemption everywhere implies it as the eternal and essential idea; his hope for the future of mankind consists in its ultimate realisation. In the most sacred relations of human life he finds its God-given types and pledges. The oneness of the married state was intended to prefigure it. This mystery is great, but he speaks it of Christ and of the Church; they are not twain, but one. "No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth

it; even as Christ also doth the Church, for we are limbs of His body."

This truth of the organic vital unity of men was to him the divinely revealed principle of the constitution of society, as it renewed its youth in the first Christian communities. To false-tongued Greeks in Asia he appealed for the social virtue of veracity on the ground of the One Body: "Put away falsehood; speak the truth each with his neighbour; for we are limbs one of another." To the quarrelling Corinthians he expounded at once their folly and their sin. They were rending the Body, they were dividing Christ. "Is Christ divided?" "There must be no rent in the Body." And to confront their differences and their distractions he developed his great metaphor with a felicity unparalleled before or since: "As the Body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the Body being many are one Body, so also is Christ: for by one Spirit were we all baptized into one Body. . . . For the Body also is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand I am not of the Body, it is not therefore not of the Body; and if the ear should say, Because

I am not an eye, I am not of the Body, it is not therefore not of the Body. If all the Body were an eye, where were the hearing? If all were hearing, where were the smelling? But now God hath set the members, each one of them in the Body as it hath pleased Him. And if all were one member, where were the Body? But now they are many members, but one Body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. . . . God hath tempered the Body together, giving more abundant honour to that which lacketh, that there may be no schism in the Body, but that the members may have the same care one for the other. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be glorified, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular."

So attractive is the brilliant rhetoric with which St. Paul draws out his conception of the body and its members, and so readily does the metaphor lend itself to a practical application to common social needs, that at times we are inclined to regard it as far more im-

pressive than the image from still life which Christ Himself adopts to figure forth His relation to all who belong to Him.

Yet we do well to remind ourselves that, whatever element of truth may underlie the assertion that Christianity, as a system of thought, is the product of the mind of St. Paul, yet here at least, in his fundamental conception, he has no claim to be original. The development of the metaphor in which he loved to express the great thought of the unity of all human life was wholly his own ; but the thought itself was given him by his Master.

By a single phrase, whereby Christ chose again and again to describe Himself in His earthly life, He had launched the great idea, and at the same time had claimed to be not merely its exponent, but the pledge in His own person of its realisation. When He rejected the exclusiveness of the title "the Son of David," and chose rather to speak of Himself as "the Son of Man," He was setting up a claim which stands and must ever stand solitary and alone in human history—a proof itself (if proof were needed now) of the entire uniqueness of the personality which could dare to make the claim.

For He claimed to be in a unique relationship—a relationship as yet, indeed, left wholly undefined—to every human being. And this startling, uninterpreted title, which meets us so often in the pages of the Synoptic Gospels, finds its meaning expounded and developed in the most striking parable of the Fourth Gospel:

“I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman: every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh it away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bear more fruit. . . . Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the Vine, so neither can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without Me—apart from Me—ye can do nothing.”

Not, perhaps, so human a picture—not so powerful and practical as a working metaphor for the regulation of society; and yet, when we examine it, possessing one element which renders it more marvellously adapted to its purpose than the more attractive image of St. Paul.

To St. Paul's thought we are the Body, fitly framed together and compacted by every link of the whole equipment, growing up into Christ, who is the Head. To the completeness of the Body and the performance of its common tasks every limb is necessary. This man lends an eye; that man lends a hand, and another a foot; and so the joint result achieved is far more than the sum of the efficiencies of individual parts. "Ye are one Body and severally members thereof," and "the Head of every man is Christ."

But, after all, the whole of the truth is not expressed. Christ is more to us than the head is to the body; and St. Paul himself knows this, and now and again at the risk of confusion in his metaphors he speaks of the whole Body, head and limbs together, as "the Christ," and he tells us that the Church is not only His Body, but "the fulfilment of Him who all in all is being fulfilled."

The parable of Christ escapes this imperfection, and by a natural image supplies the deficiency: "I am the vine, ye are the branches of the vine." Not, as we too often seem to read it, "I am the stock of the vine, and ye

are the branches that grow out of the stock"; but "I am the vine; I am the tree, ye are branches of the tree; I am the whole, ye are the parts which make up the whole."

Again and again, as we read the Gospels, we are confronted by that miracle which of all miracles is the most impressive to the student of history and literature—a miracle which encourages our faith as much as other miracles have proved its stumbling-blocks in these later days—the marvellous originality and uniqueness of the person and utterances of Jesus Christ. With all their divergencies and discrepancies, the first three Gospels agree in the presentation of a single and consistent character, asserting enormous claims, and acting as we should demand that it should act supposing those claims to be true. If His words are recorded differently by different writers, if the incidents of His life take a different colouring and appear in different contexts, the very diversity serves only to emphasise the unity of the whole conception. And when we turn to the Fourth Gospel, and the scenes are wholly changed, and the picture is set in a new historical frame, yet it is the same character which manifests itself in fresh surroundings,

with the same self-consciousness and the same self-renunciation, showing the same tenderness and the same severity, making the same astonishing claims, though in wholly different language and to wholly different listeners.

The records are as different as we could possibly conceive them, but they are dealing with the same living personality. It is the same Christ; other eyes have seen Him, other hands have handled Him; that is all. No theory of a literary invention, even if we could find a historical time and place for its production, could long satisfy a thoughtful mind. Nothing but the actual truth of His actions and His claims—marvellous as both alike must ever remain—can account for the existence of these records of His life.

If the Fourth Gospel has presented and still presents the most serious literary difficulties, yet on the other hand it is this Gospel that impresses the reader most deeply with the divineness of the utterances which it records. How many a distressed enquirer after the truth has at times found every book of Scripture closed as it were against him, and has turned in the earnestness of despair to the 14th, 15th, 16th,

and 17th chapters of St. John, certain that there at least something above him and beyond him, something more than human, something of another world, is speaking to him—speaking in tones that silence his misgivings and reassure his faith; and, as he has read on, has experienced in himself, as Origen¹ says, a vestige of inspiration—*παθὼν ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀναγινώσκειν ἵχνος ἐνθουσιασμοῦ*.

And of all that great and inspiring section no part is more calculated to arrest our attention and convince us of the divineness of the speaker than the words in which Christ claims to be the Vine of humanity. What teacher ever addressed such words to his pupils? “You and I,” He says, “are linked together by more than the closest bonds of human teaching and discipleship. We are One. As the branches are one with the tree, so that they cannot be without it, nor it without them; so you are one with Me, and I am one with you.”

What consequences flow from such a relationship? It follows that in some mysterious way even Christ Himself is incomplete without us. For there is no tree without its branches, no whole without its parts. “The Church . . . is

¹ *De Principiis*, iv. 6.

the fulness of Him." And still more obviously it follows that the disciple cannot live his life at all without his Master. "Without Me ye can do nothing."

I have used the metaphors of St. Paul and of Christ Himself in their broadest application. I have spoken of the whole of mankind as the Body of which Christ is the Head; I have spoken of the Vine of humanity. I claim to do so, because Christ called Himself "the Son of Man." But if every human being is by his very creation and constitution so related to Christ, whether as yet he knows it or not, and whether he believes it or not—what then was the apostolic band to whom Christ's words were immediately addressed? What is the Church which St. Paul says is Christ's Body?

I would answer this important question shortly thus. The apostles were the little group of human souls to whom was entrusted the first revelation of the great human truth, with the duty of preserving and proclaiming it. The Church is the nucleus of that regenerated human society which is to grow out of the recognition and realisation of the true human constitution.

God works slowly as in eternity, and God

works specially within a defined but ever-expanding sphere of operation. We are only at the beginning yet after centuries have gone by.

The new Church of the apostolic days sprang forward instantly to claim individual men and women and pledge them by her sacraments of unity to live the ideal life of common work and mutual helpfulness; and in the early strength of her enthusiasm she promised shortly to fulfil her destiny and absorb the vast humanity that lay about her. The end seemed near, but before the apostolic age had closed the vision shifted into the further future; and we who can look backwards now as they looked forwards can see that "the end is not by-and-by."

But let us not mistrust the truth of their early vision. The Church has lost sight of it too often, and has thereby failed to understand her mission and her hope. She has mistaken the present necessities of exclusiveness and limitation—which are the very conditions of a strong and effective society—for eternal barriers set up between man and man. She has lost sight of her ultimate purpose of universal inclusion. She has allowed whole provinces of human life to remain outside her sphere of action, confining herself too

much to the distinctively religious needs and aspirations, instead of claiming every energy of life, every advance of knowledge, as a part of her inheritance. She has thought of herself as the favourite of Christ rather than as one with Christ; and so she has looked out on men with other eyes than His, and has despaired of the great world instead of saving it. She has wondered at goodness outside her own bounds, and sometimes has dared to deny it, instead of recognising all goodness in all men as a fresh pledge that they are Christ's and must be claimed for Him.

We of to-day insist upon the assertion that theology is a science; its methods are in turn the methods of philosophy and history and social science. The older thinkers were perhaps more near the truth in claiming that it is the science of the sciences, the interpreter and harmoniser of them all. It is vain for us to say that now, unless we are prepared to live and act accordingly, to welcome every fresh advance of knowledge as a divine light given to men, patiently to stand by ourselves if need be that other workers may press on the faster, religiously to aid their efforts by smoothing as we may their course and

letting all men see that their cause is our cause; that we stand as witnesses, in the midst of all variety of knowledge and discoveries, that each is complementary to the other, that all are essential to the progress of the whole, that eye and hand and foot and all the rest are but one Man.

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Let me sum up in a few words, and I have done. We have faced the problem of life as it presents itself to earnest minds at the present day; we have seen that the completeness of the whole is being achieved at the cost of the completeness of the parts. But we have learned that the Christian revelation has anticipated the distress we feel as individuals on finding more than ever as the centuries pass that one man cannot be all, and has told us by way of reassurance that all are and shall be One. And so a new light dawns on the meaning and the destiny of the individual life; its perfection is not to be the rounded completeness of the whole, but the perfect adaptation of the part to its place in the whole. The Incarnation, when "God took Man upon Himself to deliver him"—*Tu ad liberandum suscepisti hominem*—is what the biologist might call the anticipation of type in the long series of

development, the pledge of the final consummation. Christ is one with the race, which finds its unity and attains its goal in Him. He is the Whole of which we are the parts, the Tree of which we are the branches. We shall know our place and fulfil our function in proportion as we learn to recognise our oneness with Him and our dependence upon Him. No separate, self-regarding, independent life can be ours; if we are to bear fruit, it can only be as we abide in Him and He in us. So then, as we bow before Him and confess the selfishness and separateness of our past lives and ask, "Lord, what henceforth wilt Thou have me to do?" the answer will indeed be given to each of us in varying forms according to our special powers; but for all alike the central command, which declares the principle of life, will be the same: "Abide in Me, and I in you: for without Me ye can do nothing."

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